

Hidden Creek Valley

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

National Park Service
US Department of the Interior



J. Stevaert

Beautiful alpine meadows and towering limestone peaks await visitors to this remote valley. Hidden Creek is dammed by the side of the Kennicott Glacier and the seasonal lake that fills each summer (Hidden Lake) is filled with icebergs. The lake drains every summer, after which the lake bed is strewn with bergs. The valley is a steep walled which means there are miles of side hill hiking over rock and scree slopes and fragile alpine meadows. Creek crossings and brushy willow and alder thickets make it hard, but very rewarding traveling.

Access:

Access this area by arranging an air taxi flight from McCarthy to the Hidden Creek Strip located west of the lake, or fosse strip located along the western edge of the Kennicott Glacier. You could also hike to this area from Kennicott via the Donoho Peak route and then cross the Kennicott Glacier (approx. 9 miles).

Distance/Time

approximately 10 miles one way from Fosse to Hidden Creek pass. 4 to 5 days in Hidden Creek Valley, more if hiking from/to Kennecott.

Maps:

Wrangell-St. Elias Trails Illustrated Map, USGS Topographic Quads 1:63,300 McCarthy C-6 and McCarthy C-7

Difficulty:

Strenuous, with some exposed terrain, lots of side hilling, several creek crossings, and heavy brush. Glacial travel required to hike from Kennecott. There are NO trails in Hidden Creek Valley. Route finding, reading a topographic map and using a compass are necessary skills. Hidden Creek is a glacial fed stream so crossings may be impassable during hot weather due to increased melting.

Highlights:

Spectacular views, icebergs in Hidden Lake, waterfalls, pristine alpine meadows, and wildlife.

There are many possible ways to enjoy this area:



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Hidden Creek Airstrip to the Fosse Airstrip

Hiking between the two airstrips with drop off and pickup at either end is one way to experience this area. This involves crossing Hidden Creek and hiking up and around the ridge to the north of Hidden Lake and then down to the lateral moraine of the Kennicott Glacier.

Exploring the headwaters of Hidden Creek

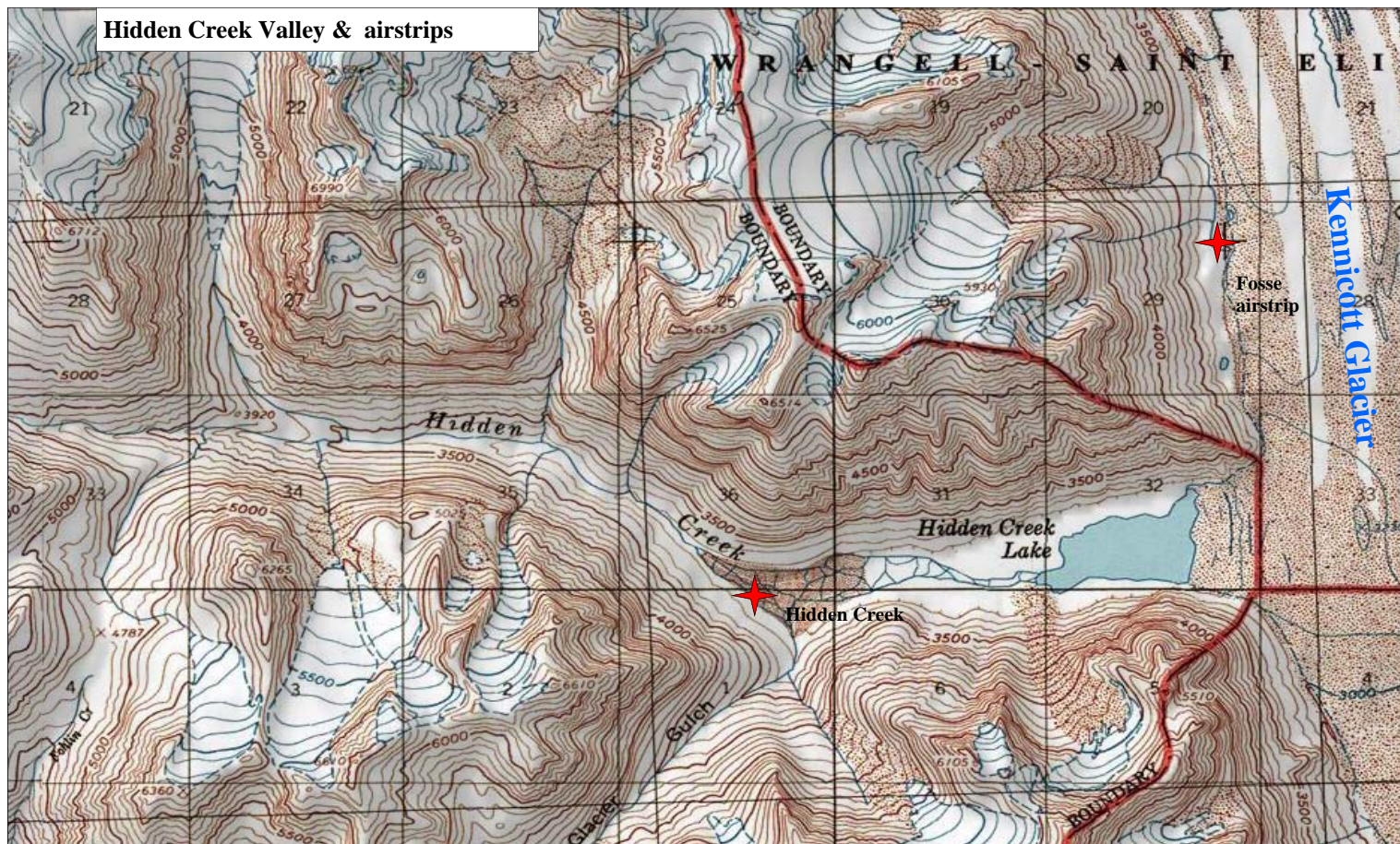
If taking the north side of Hidden Creek, there will be one more tributary creek to cross in order to continue following Hidden Creek up the valley. Past this tributary you can stay to the north of Hidden Creek, bushwhack up a snout of land and then hike the steep side hills to the upper valley. Alternately cross Hidden Creek to the south side, (the creek is gullied at this point, so crossings are limited, but there may be seasonal snow bridges) and head through the brush up a steep slope to where the creek draining out of Fohlin pass is located. From here hike and side hill up towards the head waters of Hidden Creek, or head up to Fohlin Pass.



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Hidden Creek Lake and Valley

Near the headwaters of Hidden Creek are high alpine meadows and waterfalls to explore (spread out



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while hiking so that your group does not leave a trail). From the meadows, hike up onto the rocky till left behind by the glaciers. Ascend until reaching the pass. From this pass one can descend past a series of alpine lakes and into the Lakina Glacier Valley for an extended trip, or return down Hidden Creek to one of the airstrips (Hidden Creek or Fosse), or hike all the way back to Kennecott by crossing the Kennicott and Root Glaciers.

Things to be aware of:

- Bears are present throughout this area. Proper food storage is required in Wrangell– St. Elias National Park & Preserve. Please contact the Park for information on approved food storage methods. Free bear-resistant food containers are available at all Park Visitor Centers.
- Practice Leave No Trace by camping on durable surfaces, packing out your garbage and toilet paper, and not leaving fire circles . Spread out when hiking on fragile vegetation to avoid creating a trail. The fragile plant life of the alpine meadow is susceptible to trampling.
- An ice axe is highly recommended for self arrest on exposed terrain and balance on long side hills.
- Hidden Creek is a glacially fed stream. During hot weather the creek may become impassable due to high melt water. Morning is when the melt water flow is at its lowest and is the best time to cross glacial streams.
- If hiking to or from Kennecott across the Kennicott and Root Glaciers and their moraines, you will need crampons for glacier travel. The surface melt water streams of the glacier can also become impassable in hot weather.



Hidden Lake icebergs and fireweed

R. Dineen